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Managers: Millennials Want Feedback, but Won't Ask for It

by Amy Adkins and Brandon Rigoni

Story Highlights

- Millennials require more feedback than do other generations
 - Regular meetings more than double the likelihood of engagement
 - Managers should connect with employees on a daily basis
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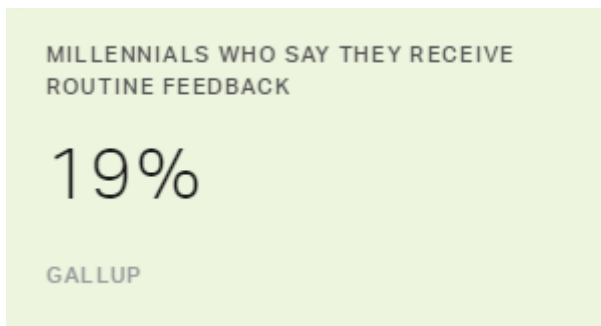
All employees want some type of feedback from their manager. But millennials might require an even greater amount of it than do other generations in the workplace -- perhaps because of their upbringing.

Millennials have grown up in an era of remarkable connectedness. They're used to receiving instantaneous feedback from parents, teachers and coaches. They've grown accustomed to having the immediate ability to ask questions, share opinions and provide commentary.

Simply put, millennials have engaged in a constant feedback loop from an early age. Given their perspective, it's understandable that this generation has an ingrained expectation for ongoing communication.

Few Millennials Receive Consistent Feedback

The problem is, managers aren't providing the feedback millennials want, according to Gallup's latest report, *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*. Only 19% of millennials say they receive routine feedback. An even smaller percentage of millennials (17%) say the feedback they do receive is meaningful.



But the breakdown in communication doesn't rest solely on managers' shoulders. Gallup also discovered that just 15% of millennials strongly agree that they routinely *ask* for feedback. And one in three millennials strongly agrees they've told their manager the one thing they need most to get their work done and why.

Millennials want feedback at work, but they don't necessarily ask for it. Leaders and managers might be tempted to point the finger at their youngest workers for falling short on communicating their desire for feedback. However, managers also need to take initiative and increase the amount of feedback they provide -- regardless of what their millennial workers may or may not request. That initiative could have a powerful effect on employee engagement. Millennials who meet with their manager on a regular basis are more than twice as likely as their generational peers to be engaged at work.

Frequent Interactions Improve Engagement

Effective feedback contains a few essential elements; chief among them is frequency. While Gallup research indicates that the frequency of meetings is less important to employees than the fact that they happen at all, engagement is *highest* among employees who meet with their manager at least once per week.

The more conversations managers have with their employees, the more engaged their employees become. But Gallup found that only 21% of millennials and 18% of non-millennials meet with their manager on a weekly basis. The majority of employees say they meet with their manager as infrequently as less than once a month (56% of millennials and 53% of non-millennials).

Ultimately, managers should strive to quickly connect with their employees every day. While this recommendation might sound exhausting, it simply means that managers should send a text or instant message, make a quick call or drop by an employee's desk or office for a few minutes. Daily connects are not 30-minute meetings; they are meant to provide opportunities for informal, ongoing communication.

Annual Performance Reviews Aren't Enough

The feedback needs of the millennial generation already appear to have inspired transformation in large companies, such as Deloitte, Adobe, Accenture and General Electric. These companies are abandoning their annual review processes because they have found them to be ineffective at improving employee performance or engagement. Employees need more than check-the-box evaluations, and millennials are leading the way for this change. They will not stay with or excel at companies that relegate feedback to annual or biannual events.

To learn more about millennials' feedback needs, including the types of conversations they want to have with their managers, download [How Millennials Want to Work and Live](#).

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